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Pair Died in Nicaraguan Clash

Two Americans Called Volunteers

By Don Oberdorfer
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The two Americans killed in a clash with government troops in Nicaragua last Saturday were Vietnam veterans who traveled to Central America at their own expense to "fight communism," the leader of a year-old Alabama paramilitary organization said yesterday.

Tom Posey, founder of Civilian-Military Assistance, said in a telephone interview that he arranged the ill-fated trip for the two volunteers, who joined anti-Sandinista insurgents in Honduras about a week before their deaths. Posey said the victims and other Americans he recruited to aid the rebels were in "no way, form or fashion" connected with the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Reagan administration has also denied that the dead men or their U.S. companions had any connection with U.S. intelligence. In statements to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), the CIA denied involvement and the State Department issued an official denial.

There was no denial that the operations in which the men were involved when they were

killed were part of the "secret war" financed by the CIA for more than two years against Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

Congressional sources said the helicopter in which the men were flying when shot down and three fixed-wing planes used in the same military action had been supplied by the CIA.

Various sources, including officials of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) being assisted by the two dead Americans, identified the pair as Dana H. Parker, 36, of Huntsville, Ala., a detective with the Huntsville

Police Department, and James P. Powell III, also 36, a pilot from Memphis.

Pentagon officials said Parker served part-time as a captain in the Special Forces Group of the Alabama National Guard in Decatur and was an enlisted Marine in Vietnam. Powell's mother, Rose, said in Memphis that Powell owned a fixed-wing airplane and had been an Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam where he was shot down.

Adolfo Calero, the FDN's chief executive officer, said in a telephone interview that Parker, Powell, four other Americans and his brother, Mario Calero, arrived in Honduras Aug. 25 to aid the insurgents.

He said Parker and Powell had been training Nicaraguan exiles at a rebel base on flying a helicopter when the two Americans suddenly announced that they were going on "a rescue mission" and took off with Mario Pozo, a Nicaraguan killed with them.

Mario Calero said last night that Parker and Powell were unarmed when they left on their final flight. He said their helicopter was equipped with rocket pods but no stretchers.

"It wasn't planned," said Posey of the helicopter flight. He insisted that volunteers processed by his organization went to the Nicaraguan border area to train, not fight.

Nicaraguan Defense Minister Humberto Ortega charged that the helicopter had joined three rebel fixed-wing planes in an attack on a government military school at Santa Clara in northern Nicaragua. Ortega said the raid was carried out "with the direct involvement of elements trained by the CIA" and that a civilian worker, 28, and three children had been killed.

Nicaragua last night requested an urgent meeting of the U.N. Security Council to deal with the "situation created by the fresh escalation of aggression." A Nicaraguan

spokesman cited the military action Saturday and the downing of a U.S.-made C47 transport plane over Nicaragua last Wednesday as some evidence of the "escalation."

The Americans who accompanied Parker and Powell to Honduras on their recent trip, according to FDN chief Calero, included:

- Cliff Albright of Memphis, a retired Republic Airlines pilot and commander of a paramilitary organization known as Phantom Division, Tennessee Airborne.

The January 1984 edition of Soldier of Fortune magazine said Albright, described as a "master parachute rigger, jumpmaster and instructor with 510 jumps," was part of a three-week mission to El Salvador in August 1983.

- Louis McKnight, who had been an instructor at Hagler Air Service in Memphis. Powell had been a friend of McKnight since high school, according to Powell's mother, Rose.

- Walter (Cisco) Blanton of Sheffield, Ala., who described himself last night as a 10-year veteran of the Special Forces, including the Alabama National Guard.

- A man described only as Bill. Powell's former wife, Geri, told Washington Post staff writer Fred Barbash that Powell left Aug. 23 for Central America, telling her that

"he was going over there to fly supplies and clothes and medicine" and would be back in 10 days.

On Aug. 1, she said, Powell attended a meeting at a Memphis Veterans of Foreign Wars post at which Mario Calero was the main speaker. An advertisement for the meeting said the subject was "the Nicaraguan Democratic Force: FDN, previously sponsored by the CIA and had to function secretly but they are now free to tell the truth." CMA of Decatur, presumably Posey's Civilian-Military Assistance group, was listed among the sponsors.